



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
In Cooperation with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture
West Virginia Field Office
1900 Kanawha Blvd E
Charleston, West Virginia 25305



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Contact: Charmaine Wilson
(304) 357-5126

USDA-NASS West Virginia Field Office announces 2017 Census of Agriculture response rates, data release details, and upcoming special studies

Charleston, West Virginia – United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) concluded data collection for the 2017 Census of Agriculture with a 71.5 percent national response rate. West Virginia finished with a 73.5 percent response rate. The Census, conducted once every five years, was mailed to more than 3 million known and potential farms and ranches across the United States late last year. More than 30 thousand questionnaires were mailed to West Virginia farmers. Data collection ended this July. Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories will receive their Census of Agriculture questionnaires in January 2019.

“We thank each and every producer who took the time to respond to the Census,” said NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer. “The Census of Agriculture is an important part of U.S. history that remains as relevant today as it was in 1840 when it was first conducted. The Census gives voice and opportunity to all farmers and ranchers in America to tell the changing story of agriculture over the years and identify emerging trends and needs.”

Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue also offered his thanks to producers for taking part in the Census, via a video message that can be viewed at www.nass.usda.gov.

The 71.5 percent response rate for 2017 came in below the 74.6 percent response rate for the 2012 Census of Agriculture.* West Virginia’s 73.5 percent response rate for this Census is below the 77.8 percent response rate in 2012.

“We modernized elements of our data collection for this Census to make it easier for those filling out questionnaires,” said Hamer. “However, it is unrealistic to think that everyone will respond to any survey, regardless of improvements and benefits. To account for certain levels of non-response, we use accepted statistical methods and practices in our data analyses. We look forward to sharing the results of the Census when our analyses are complete.”

Data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture are scheduled to be released starting on February 21, 2019, in conjunction with the 2019 Agricultural Outlook Forum and will continue on a staggered schedule through the spring of 2019. The results of the Census will be available in aggregate form, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified, as required by Federal law. All

Census data products will be available on NASS' recently merged NASS/Ag Census website at www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus. Watch for additional news about the Ag Census on USDA-NASS social media.

Two Census special studies will also be conducted this winter: the 2018 Census of Aquaculture and the 2018 Irrigation and Water Management Survey. These questionnaires will be mailed in December and January, respectively, to the farms that reported these activities in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. For more information about these upcoming special studies, visit www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus.

The Census of Agriculture provides the only source of comprehensive agricultural data for every State and county in the nation. As such, the data are widely-used by local and national decision-makers to help shape agricultural research and education programs, inform farm programs, boost rural infrastructure, determine disaster relief needs, and more.

* NASS updated its procedures in how forms were returned that were determined to be "out of scope" are handled in response rate calculations for the 2017 Census of Agriculture, in line with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance. Returned forms that do not meet the Census of Agriculture definition of a farm or ranch are now excluded from the response rate calculation. The recalculated response rate from this procedural change resulted in a 2012 Census of Agriculture response rate of 74.6 percent instead of the previously reported 80.1 percent.